

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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IO-10 OMB-01 EUR-12 SAJ-01 (ISO) W

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R 071753Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3754

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4452

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, IZ

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN IMPRESSION OF IRAQ

1. AT SMALL LUNCHEON TODAY WITH FORMER PRESIDENT CHARLES HELOU, HE REPORTED TO FONMIN TAQLA IN MY PRESENCE HIS MEETING YESTERDAY, APRIL 6, WITH TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI, WHO HAD JUST RETURED FROM BAGHDAD. CHATTI EMPHASIZED GRAVITY OF SYRIAN-IRAQ DISPUTES OVER EUPHRATES WATER AND IRAQI STATEMENT WHICH MIGHT EVEN BE TERMED BELLICOSE THAT THEY WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT PERMIT THE SYRIANS TO CAUSE THREE MILLION IRAQIS TO DIE OF THIRST. CHATTI SAID IRAQIS APPEARED QUITE IRRATIONAL ON THIS ISSUE AND OTHER POINTS OF CONFLICT -- NOT STATED -- WITH DAMASCUS. CHATTI ALSO NOTED KIND WORDS IRAQIS HAD FOR SADAT. TAQLA COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS NOT SURPRISING IN VIEW OF THEIR CURRENT PIQUE AGAINST ASAD. HELOU SAID HE THOUGH CHATTI MEANT TO GO A BIT FURTHER IN THAT HE APPEARED SINCERELY IMPRESSED BY THE IRAQI DESIRE TO IMPROVE LONGER TERM RELATIONS WITH EGYPT. HELOU HAD INQUIRED IF CHATTI WAS ENDEAVORING TO MEDIATE BETWEEN IRAQIS AND SYRIANS, TO WHICH CHATTI RESPONDED
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EMPHATICALLY NO AND THAT ONLY PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA COULD

DECIDE TO GET INVOLVED IN SUCH A PERILOUS VENTURE.

2. I MENTIONED THAT I HAD RECENTLY SEEN A RELATIVELY RESPONSIBLE AMERICAN JOURNALIST WHO HAD RECENTLY SPENT SOME TIME IN BAGHDAD. THE JOURNALIST HAD TOLD ME THAT EASTERN BLOC REPS WERE NOT ONLY TOTALLY SURPRISED BY IRAQI-IRANIAN AGREEMENT BUT YHAT THEY CONSIDERED IT A MAJOR DEFEAT FOR EASTERN BLOC POLICY IN IRAQ AND POSSIBLY BEYOND ITS BORDERS. HUNGARIAN AND SOVIET JOURNALISTS HAD BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE DESRRAY OF THE EASTERN BLOC ON THIS ISSUE AND DID NOT HESITATE TO MENTION IT TO THEIR AMERICAN COLLEAGUE. I OPINED TO HELOU THAT I COULD UNDERSTAND EASTERN BLOC CONCERN BUT WONDERED WHETHER IRAN-IRAQ AGREEMENT MIGHT NOT RELEASE IRAQI ASSETS FOR MISCHIEF ELSEWHERE, SUCH AS WITH SYRIA AND POSSIBLY IN THE GULF AREA. TAQLA SAID THAT ARAB GENERALLY INTERPRETED IRANIAN-IRAQI AGREEMENT AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS RELATIONS WITH USG, WHICH OF COURSE SOVIET BLOC DID NOT REPEAT NOT APPRECIATE. HE CONCURRED, HOWEVER, THAT IRAQ CAPABILITIES FOR MISCHIEF ARE GREATLY ENHANCED NOW THAY THEY NO LONGER HAD TO DEAL WITH THE KURDS.

3. FOREGOING IS MAY BE OLD STORY TO RECEIPIENTS, BUT WE HAD NOT HEARD IT STATED SO SUCCINCTLY IN BEIRUT. GODLEY

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